Presentation by Frank Whitworth, Executive Director of Ground Zero, the gay and lesbian advocacy organization in Colorado Springs, to the District 11 School Board Hearing on a revised JICE Publication Policy. Telephone-719-635-6086

Ladies and gentlemen of the board, tonight you have heard and you will hear much that is simply myths and stereotypes of the type that lead to oppression. These are being used to justify a policy proposal that is unneeded and that has as its central purpose the circumvention of consideration of the proposed amended JICE publication policy--the real reason for this hearing tonight.

This "rogue" policy is kin to last year's soundly rejected "Community Standards Resolution" offered by Colorado For Family Values. It is a policy from these same people who also brought us the divisiveness of Amendment 2; it is a policy that comes from these same people who road into Manitou Springs on a rainbow looking for fairies in every sidewalk crack and on every road; it is a policy from these same people who stirred up the publication storm to begin with and it is a policy brought to us by this same organization that was founded and lead by a person who supports the Common Law Courts of the extremist Patriot and Militia movement and that is now lead by a man who endorsed those beliefs.

Mr. Perkins will do his usual effective job of dredging up the false and misleading studies of extremist "research" people and will use these as if they were true. I speak primarily of Paul Cameron, a former psychologist who was dropped from membership in the American Psychological and Nebraska Psychological Associations; whose license to practice was lifted in his home state of Nebraska.

Why were these actions taken? For violation of ethical principles through the design of studies and the interpretation of results for other than finding the truth; that were not objective and that were not scientific.

Further. the American Sociological Association in a statement said that "[it]... officially and publicly states that Paul Cameron is not a sociologist, and condemns his consistent misrepresentation of sociological research."

Now, here is a person on whose "studies" I would want to base essentially all of my beliefs and campaigns on an issue.

The only credence that this man and his arguments have are those that we foolishly bestow on him by continuing to repeat his lies. I will not do so tonight and will address my comments to the subject at hand--the JICE student publication policy. I call on others who are here tonight to do likewise.

One last final observation before I address the specific subject at hand. I don't believe that Colorado Springs wants or needs another event to add to those that encouraged the Wall Street Journal to print the very negative article about it last year. A moderate and reasoned approach to the issues addressed here tonight would better serve the community whether you believe the Journal article was correct or not. There is a great deal of national press focused on the School Board's deliberations. What you do will not just be heard and seen by the local community.

I believe, and many here tonight believe, that the current student publication policy serves its purpose well and does not need to be amended or changed. It conforms completely to state law and to do much else would stray into conflict with that law.

However, the proposed replacement appears also to fit within the state law and is probably acceptable--except for several problems.

Those problems deal with the question of why we are here to begin with. What caused the Board to be holding these hearings? This is clearly that one student newspaper published three stories and articles on homosexuality--only one of which tried in any way to support or condemn homosexuality--the third, Mr. Perkins' scurrilous letter.

The second deals with the intent of the policy. What are the reasons it is being passed?

And the third deals with the potential application of the new policy because there are areas in the policy that give wide latitude to the school board and to school administrations.

Several Board members and the Board chair have indicated that the purpose and intent of this policy are not to impose prior constraint or censorship on freedom of student expression protected under state law.

In truth that we are here has already imposed constraint and the fact of self-imposed censorship by teachers and student publishers who would fear the results if they printed similar articles in the future.

Inappropriate kneejerk reactions and statements by some officials have done, in some ways, exactly what those who launched the attack on the freedom of expression wanted-----to impose a "de facto" censorship.

I want to believe that the school board has the best intentions in proposing this change and that it indeed does not wish to use these changes to foster censorship.

In view of the fact that the Board wants it to be known that this policy is not for that purpose and that it is not, in fashioning it, in any way condemning or denouncing the legitimacy of the original two articles, I wish to propose that the following preamble be inserted at the beginning of the policy or, on passage of the policy, a statement to this effect be appended thereto.

towit:

Coincidental to examining student publication policies in answer to questions about two stories that appeared in the Lever Newspaper in October of 1996, the Board discovered areas where there were problems with that policy that needed to be addressed or clarified.

In amending that policy to make needed corrections it should in no way be construed that the Board is rendering a judgement on those articles or implying that they were inappropriate and/or violated district policy under the old policy. And further, it is not the intention of the Board to suggest or state that these articles or similar articles would be inappropriate or restricted under the amended policy.

I have made copies of this and will make them available to the Board.

In closing, I would like to leave you with one amusing anecdote. I should apologize in advance to Boardmember Art.Nutter, who made the comment referenced, for repeating same but I believe that it says so much.

After I spoke at the last Board Meeting, Mr. Nutter, realizing that he had met me previously, came up to me and said: "I had no idea who you were when we met in Antler's Park. I thought you were someone normal"----and on realizing how that sounded he said---"and of course you are."

Thank you for that affirmation Mr. Nutter and thank you Ladies and Gentlemen of the Board for this opportunity.